

What is Inclusion?

An Overview for Educators

What is inclusion?

In short, inclusion refers to the practice of educating students with and without disabilities together rather than separately. But inclusion involves more than just having students with disabilities in close proximity to their non-disabled peers. In order for it to be true inclusion, students with disabilities must receive access to the general education curriculum and receive the specially designed instruction and supports that they need to succeed as learners.



Inclusion **IS**

- A philosophy and a practice to be applied to **ALL** students regardless of their label.
- An attitude of acceptance, cooperation and appreciation of diversity.
- Collaborative, team-based decision making.
- A process guided by on-going assessment of student progress.
- Highly effective, research-based instructional strategies. (In other words, it's just good teaching!)

Inclusion **Is NOT**

- All students, all day; some students need a more structured environment.
- Expecting all children to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way.
- Sacrificing the education of the students without disabilities.
- Dumping children into general education classrooms without the necessary support for teachers and students.
- Watering down curricula; most students with disabilities in Florida will take the FCAT and will work toward a standard diploma so we can't afford to water down the curriculum!

Some Benefits of Inclusion

- Students with disabilities show increases in social and communication skills as well as in their academic achievement.
- Students with disabilities develop more positive, pro-social behaviors.
- Students with disabilities take part in more school activities.
- Strategies that support the learning of students with disabilities also support the learning of students without disabilities.
- Typically developing children have an opportunity to learn about others who are different from them.
- Special education and general education teachers become more skilled at their job.

Inclusion vs. Mainstreaming

Many people use the terms mainstreaming and inclusion interchangeably but they are, in fact, two very different approaches to educating students with disabilities. The mainstreaming model was typically used with students with disabilities who were performing at or near grade-level and who could function in a general education classroom with little or no support. Inclusion, on the other hand, does not require students to be at any specific level of mastery before they can become a member of a general education classroom; instead, an inclusive classroom adapts to the needs of the students.

What Does the Law Say?

Both *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) provide us with guidance about how to educate students with disabilities. Neither of these laws, however, specifically mentions the word inclusion. Instead, they say that students with disabilities should be placed in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and that they should have access to general education curriculum and settings.

Highlights From NCLB

- All students are held to high standards.
- Special emphasis is placed on implementing research-based, effective, educational programs and practices.
- All teachers must be highly-qualified in the subject areas that they teach.
- Increased accountability measures for schools, districts, and states.
- Students with disabilities are included in these accountability measures.

For more information about NCLB please visit the Department of Education's Website at <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.html?src=pb>

Highlights From IDEA

- IDEA has a strong preference for educating students with disabilities in regular classes with appropriate aids and services.
- The general classroom **MUST** be the **FIRST** placement considered by the IEP team.
- Students with disabilities should be removed from the regular educational environment **ONLY** when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

For more information about IDEA, please visit the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) Website at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html>

Accessing the General Education Curriculum



As per IDEA and NCLB, students with disabilities must have access to the general curriculum. In Florida, that means that all students must receive instruction that is focused on the Sunshine State Standards.

We provide students with disabilities with access to the general curriculum in a number of different ways including:

- Using differentiated instructional methods.
- Providing unique accommodations and support to enhance learning and to allow participation in statewide assessments.
- Providing modifications to course requirement or content.

The student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) will provide details about the supports and services that the student receives and will identify any accommodations or modifications that are needed.

What's the Difference Between Accommodations and Modifications?

Accommodations

- Change how students are taught and demonstrate what they have learned
- Same objectives
- Allow students to work toward a standard diploma

Modifications

- Change what students are expected to learn and demonstrate
- Focus on different objectives
- Lead to a special diploma

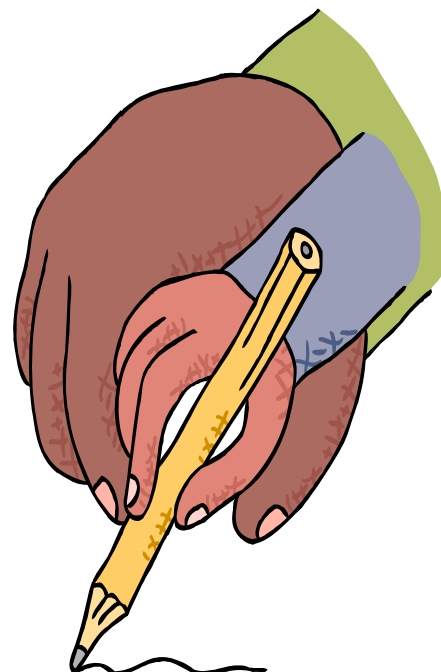
Models of Support

There is no single “right” way to include students with disabilities. In fact, schools that do a good job of supporting students with disabilities typically use multiple models. In order to determine which models to use, teachers and administrators must examine the needs of their students with disabilities. The Florida Department of Education has identified several models which can be effective in supporting students with disabilities who are included in general education classrooms. They are:

Consultation—General Education and Special Education (SPED) teachers meet regularly to plan, implement, and monitor instructional alternatives designed to ensure that the student with a disability is successful in the general education classroom. SPED teachers providing support via consultation are required to maintain a record of the teachers, courses, and SPED students to whom they are providing services.

Support Facilitation—An SPED teacher provides direct support for SPED students in the general classroom. Support facilitators may work and move among two or more basic education classrooms working with the general education teachers and students. The frequency and intensity of support varies based upon the students and/or general educator's need for assistance.

Co-Teaching—A classroom in which two teachers, one SPED and one general education teacher, share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for all students in a class, some of whom are SPED and some of whom are not. In order to be considered co-teaching, this delivery system is provided whenever a class/subject is taught and must continue for the entire class period.



For more information about these and other models, including certification requirements, please visit the Florida Department of Education's Website at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/curriculum/ccd.htm>.

The Importance of Collaboration



All of the models of support mentioned above require collaboration and teamwork. Collaboration teams may include general education and SPED teachers, paraprofessionals, related services providers, etc. Effective collaborative teams consult, plan, problem-solve, and work together to address student needs. Regularly scheduled time to meet and to discuss the progress and needs of students with disabilities is a must.

What Makes Inclusion Work?



- Support from the principal and other administrators
- A school vision that values diversity
- A plan for inclusion that allows for flexibility and continuous improvement
- Collaborative educational teams that include parents as partners
- Flexible approaches to teaching and learning
- Curriculum and assessment that are adapted to meet individual student needs
- On-going learning opportunities about inclusion
- A variety of instructional methods for different kinds of learners (see below for some examples)

Some Instructional Practices that Support Inclusion

- Differentiated instruction
- Multiple intelligences
- Multi-sensory instruction
- Interactive learning
- Cooperative learning
- Flexible group
- Integrated curriculum
- Scaffolding
- Accommodations and modification
- Tiered lessons
- Partial participation
- Positive behavioral supports
- Assistive/instructional technology
- Peer supports

Want to Learn More?

Contact the Florida Inclusion Network

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